

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4619

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 9780

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (CHRISTOPHER, WARREN)
SUBJECT: BRIEFING PAPERS FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY'S VISIT

REF: STATE 157966

1. IN RESPONSE TO REFTTEL, EMBASSY SUBMITS BRIEFING PAPER
ON INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY.

2. ALTHOUGH THE DESAI GOVERNMENT HAS STRESSED THE CONTINUITY
OF INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY, IT HAS DEVELOPED IMPORTANT NUANCES
WITHIN OLDER PARAMETERS WHICH GIVE ITS APPROACH A SOMEWHAT
DIFFERENT LOOK AND FEEL. SOME OF THESE NUANCES AMPLIFY THE
POLICY MODIFICATIONS ADOPTED IN THE LAST YEAR OF MRS. GANDHI'S
GOVERNMENT, WHEN THE GOI CAME TO RECOGNIZE THAT INDIA'S
STRONGER POLITICAL AND SECURITY POSITION AND ITS CHANGING
ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS ARGUED FOR A POLICY OF LESSER DEPENDENCE
ON THE SOVIET UNION AND A MORE FORTHCOMING POSTURE TOWARD THE
WEST. THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S CALL FOR MORE GENUINE NON-ALIGN-
MENT IS THE STRONGEST EVIDENCE OF ITS INTEREST IN BROADENING
AND DEEPENING THIS APPROACH. ORIGINALLY MADE BY DESAI JUST
BEFORE HE ASSUMED OFFICE, IT WAS RECENTLY MADE MORE EXPLICIT
IN THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT BY FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE WHO
STAKED OUT FOR THE JANATA GOVERNMENT CLAIMS BOTH TO AN IN-
HERITED NATIONAL CONSENSUS FOR NON-ALIGNMENT AND TO AN IM-
PARTIALITY WHICH WILL PERMIT INDIA TO ADJUST ITS FOREIGN POLICY
RESPONSE TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES. VAJPAYEE MADE CLEAR THAT
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THE GOI'S PERCEPTION OF NON-ALIGNMENT ENCOMPASSES (A) EVEN-
HANDEDNESS AND GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL PARTIES, (B) FREE-
DOM TO JUDGE ISSUES ON THEIR MERITS AND TO CHOOSE IMPARTIALLY
AMONG THE AVAILABLE OPTIONS ON THE BASIS OF BENEFIT TO INDIA,
(C) A BASIS FOR CONSTRUCTIVE INITIATIVES, NOT A POLICY OF
"IMMOBILISM", AND (D) AN INSISTENCE THAT NON-ALIGNMENT NOT
ONLY BE GENUINE BUT ALSO APPEAR SO.

3. SOVIET RELATIONS. GIVEN THE ANTI-COMMUNIST BACKGROUND OF MANY OF THE LEADERS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND THE WHOLE-HEARTED APPROVAL MOSCOW HAD GIVEN TO MRS. GANDHI, THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT SURPRISINGLY SENT TO DELHI A SERIES OF HIGH LEVEL VISITORS LED BY FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO TO STABILIZE THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE GOI. THE DESAI GOVERNMENT EMPHASIZED CONTINUITY IN ITS APRIL SESSION WITH GROMYKO, AND NO LONGER QUESTIONS THE PROPRIETY OF THE 1971 INDO-SOVIET TREATY, AS THE PM HAD DONE AS HE WAS ASSUMING OFFICE. A KEY TO THE INDIAN DESIRE TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS IS THE LACK OF DEPENDABLE ALTERNATE SOURCE OF ARM SUPPLIES. HOWEVER, TROUBLE-SOME PROBLEMS IN THE INDO SOVIET RELATIONSHIP REMAIN: THE RUPEE-RUBLE EXCHANGE RATES; HEAVY WATER SUPPLIES, AND TRADE QUESTIONS. IN HIS RECENT PARLIAMENTARY PRESENTATION, VAJPAYEE DECLARED HIS CONFIDENCE THAT INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS WOULD CONTINUE TO IMPROVE, BUT SIGNIFICANTLY ADDED THAT IN CONTRAST TO THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, THE JANATA GOVERNMENT DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT RELATIONS WITH THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN ANY WAY INHIBIT IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND WESTERNEUROPE. AN INDIAN OFFICIAL HAS CHARACTERIZED INDIA'S PRESENT POLICY TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION AS BASED UPON "BENEFIT, NOT VIAS."

4. CHINA. MANY OF THE LEADERS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAVE ALSO BEEN HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE PRC IN THE PAST. HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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ASIDE FROM DESAI'S JUNE PRESS CONFERENCE REPLY WHEN HE SAID THAT IT WAS UP TO CHINA AS THE AGGRESSOR TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN IMPROVING RELATIONS, THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAS SOUGHT TO AVOID RHETORIC AND INSTEAD TO EXPLORE QUIETLY THE POSSIBILITY OF BETTERING TIES WITH PEKING. THIS REPRESENTS A CONTINUATION OF THE EFFORTS OF THE FINAL YEAR OF MRS. GANDHI'S GOVERNMENT, WHEN THE GOI APPARENTLY RECOGNIZED THAT INDIA'S SECURITY ON BOTH ITS NORTHERN BORDER AND WITH PAKISTAN WOULD BE ENHANCED BY AN IMPROVEMENT OF ITS RELATIONS WITH CHINA. GOI OFFICIALS STRESS THAT IMPROVEMENT CANNOT BE AT THE COST OF INDIA'S TIES TO OTHER COUNTRIES, AND URGE THAT PEKING VIEW SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS "FOR THEIR OWN SAKE." THEY ARE PLEASED WITH THE PRC'S OBJECTIVE MEDIA COVERAGE OF INDIAN EVENTS, WHICH CONTRASTS WITH ITS FREQUENT LAMBASTING OF MRS. GANDHI. ACTUAL PROGRESS IN IMPROVING TIES HAS BEEN SLOW; THE MOST IMPORTANT ADVANCE SINCE JANATA TOOK OVER WAS INDIAN ATTENDANCE AT THE CANTON TRADE FAIR AND A MODEST RESUMPTION OF TRADE WHICH FOLLOWED. NO ONE HERE EXPECTS A DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGH, AND THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE GOI IS PREPARING PARLIAMENT OR THE PUBLIC FOR THE POLITICAL COMPROMISES WHICH WOULD BE REQUIRED.

5. NEIGHBORS. THE GOI HAS TRIED HARD TO IMPROVE TIES WITH ITS NEIGHBORS AND REASSURE THE SMALLER SUBCONTINENTAL COUNTRIES OF ITS INTENTION NEITHER TO INTERVENE IN THEIR DOMESTIC AFFAIRS NOR SEEK TO OVERAWE THEM. IN PURSUING THIS POLICY, THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED THE POLICY OF ACCOMODATION WITH PAKISTAN OF ITS PREDECESSOR AND HAS ADOPTED AN EXEMPLARY ATTITUDE DURING THE PROLONGED POLITICAL CRISIS THERE. DESPITE STRONG PRESSURES FROM WITHIN THE JANATA PARTY ITSELF, THE GOI HAS REFRAINED FROM GIVING OR EXPRESSING ANY SUPPORT FOR THE NEPALESE OPPOSITION. ITS RECORD ON BANGLADESH HAS BEEN EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE AND INCLUDES PROGRESS TOWARD THE RESOLUTION OF THE FARAKKA WATER-SHARING ISSUE AND THE BREAK-UP OF BORDER CAMPS (USED WITH AT LEAST THE ACQUIESCENCE OF THE PREVIOUS INDIAN GOVERNMENT AS BASES FOR INFILTRATION INTO

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BANGLADESH) AND REPATRIATION OF BANGLADESHI DISSIDENTS TO THEIR HOMELAND. THERE HAVE BEEN NO PROBLEMS IN GOI RELATIONS WITH SRI LANKA, WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO REMAIN GOOD.

GOHEEN

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